

2020 City of Roanoke Legislative Program

Fiscal Policy

Any proposed comprehensive tax reform must be based on the fundamental principle that local revenue sources cannot be further limited or restricted by the General Assembly without the enactment of legislation that will authorize localities to establish meaningful and viable alternative sources of local revenue.

The General Assembly must vigilantly and effectively avoid enactment of any further unfunded mandates to localities and initiate procedures to review, assess, and eliminate existing and burdensome mandates imposed on localities. Unfunded mandates include mandatory tax exemptions to specific groups of individuals, as worthy and deserving as they may be.

Technology and Infrastructure Policy

The General Assembly should eliminate impediments facing localities from bringing 21st Century technology to their citizens.

The Commonwealth and the City must develop partnerships among federal, state, and local constituencies to expand highway infrastructure development throughout Virginia's Blue Ridge, including the expansion of I-73 which incorporates improving the safety and economic development worthiness of US Rte. 220.

Environmental Policy

The City opposes any efforts by the General Assembly to mandate further exemptions from payment of local stormwater utility fees. In addition, the City requests the General Assembly to hold localities harmless from any costs associated with increases in the load of sediment and other pollutants of concern that enter waters of the Commonwealth, including rivers, streams, and tributaries, where such increases in the Total Maximum Daily Load for a locality are attributable to projects and developments approved by the Commonwealth that include crossings of bodies of water within the Commonwealth.

The City supports legislation to promote the generation and use of renewable energy, including expanding the authority of localities to enter into power purchase agreements with utilities for the generation of electricity through solar power.

The City supports providing localities with the option, not the mandate, to regulate the use of plastic bags and disposable extruded polystyrene (Styrofoam) food and beverage containers within their communities.

The City encourages socially responsible investments, including investments in renewable energy, by VRS and all other funds invested by the Commonwealth.

Economic Development Policy

The City encourages the General Assembly to maintain existing tools, including historic tax credits, to encourage development and redevelopment throughout the City and Virginia's Blue Ridge Region.

The City supports continuation and increased funding for the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund (COF). This important economic development incentive program has played a major role in several Roanoke job creation projects. The COF is an essential tool in competing with other states who often offer lucrative incentive packages to prospective companies.

The City encourages the General Assembly to refrain from enacting further limitations on planning, development, and zoning tools that localities may use in regulating and promoting development within their communities.

Public transportation is an important economic development tool for the regional economy. The General Assembly should increase funding for transit services and create opportunities for regional localities to collaborate in expanding public transportation throughout the region.

The General Assembly must address the issue of annexation and consolidation in the 21st Century as an economic development tool to assist cities like Roanoke. The General Assembly should enable counties to adopt local revenue sources and incur debt following procedures currently available to cities.

Education Policy

The City of Roanoke and Roanoke City Public Schools strongly urge the General Assembly to amend current school funding programs to fully fund its obligations under the Standards of Quality (SOQ) by securing a sustainable state revenue source to assist localities and school divisions in modernizing and maintaining public school facilities to provide more equitable educational opportunities for all Virginia students. This recommendation will require amendments to establish transparent criteria for equitable distribution of such funding, including funding to support the technology needed to meet the Standards of Learning (SOL) requirements and enhance learning by all children.

Public Safety Policy

The City supports legislation that preserves law and order and promotes public safety throughout the City, including legislative initiatives to assist localities in protecting the public from gun violence.

The City supports legislation to enable localities to enact ordinances that exceed statewide standards with respect to the sale, possession, storage, and carrying of firearms and ammunition.

Civil and Voting Rights Policy

The General Assembly should consider measures to improve community relations, including the adoption of legislation to recognize sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected classes within our society.

The City supports the repeal of Article I, Section 15-A of the State Constitution regarding marriage.

The City supports passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The City supports reforms in voter registration including (i) automatic voter registration, (ii) repeal of the picture ID requirement; and (iii) same day voter registration.

The City supports reenactment of the Constitutional Amendment to establish a redistricting commission.

Community Policy

The City supports measures to ensure a statewide living wage that incorporates the value of benefits to promote the health and well-being of workers and their families.

The City supports legislation to promote healthcare for all Virginians, including reproductive healthcare, free from discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

The City supports for legislation to address the health issues presented by vaping.

2020 VML Legislative Program

The City endorses and supports the 2020 VML Legislative Program and VML Policy Committee Statements.

2020 Legislative Priorities

The City requests its legislative delegation to patron and support the following legislative initiatives:

1. Authorize localities to impose a \$0.05 tax on each disposable plastic bag or disposable paper bag provided to consumers by retailers in grocery stores, convenience stores, and drug stores. The bill would authorize retailers that timely collect the tax to retain one cent for every five cents collected.

This recommendation will require amendments to Sections 15.2-938.1 and 58.1-5835.

2. Enable localities with the authority and discretion to enact measures to prohibit firearms at publicly owned facilities and properties.

This recommendation will require an amendment to Section 15.2-915.

3. Adopt amendments to State Code to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

This recommendation will require several amendments to State Code.

4. Adopt amendments to the State Budget to increase funding for community mental health programs and facilities.

This recommendation will require amendments to the current State budget and implementation of programs for subsequent two-year budgets.

5. Adopt measures for criminal justice reform to address the specific issues of “no parole” and the cost of care for elderly prisoners.

This recommendation will require amendments to Chapter 53.1 and the State budget.

6. Enact measures to fully fund (i) the Standards of Quality (SOQ) to include a sustainable state funding source to assist localities and school divisions in modernizing public school facilities; and (ii) special needs and enhancements to teacher compensation, to provide more equitable educational opportunities for all Virginia students;.

This recommendation will require amendments to current school funding programs to secure a reliable source of revenue and establish transparent criteria for equitable distribution of such funding. Fully funding the SOQ requirements by

the General Assembly will necessarily include funding for much needed modernized school infrastructure. Fully funding programs for special needs and enhancing teacher compensation will provide for more equitable educational opportunities for our children throughout the Commonwealth.

7. Enact legislation to establish a fund and grant program relating to intervention and prevention of violence in our communities.

This recommendation will require amendments to the current State budget and implementation of programs in successive budget cycles.

8. Enact legislation to provide a local option for local governing bodies to remove monuments or memorials for war veterans.

This recommendation will require amendments to Section 15.2-1812.